(v) Tightening up in-house vigilance activity by surprise checks and inspections.

Besides the automated Customs clearance system presently in operation at Delhi Air Cargo and 6 other locations is being extended to all Customs locations. This system would cut down delays and minimise interface and thus reduce scope for the alleged undesirable practices.

Air Service to capitals of North-Eastern States

*95. SHRI E. BALANANDAN: Will the Minister of CIVIL AVIATION be pleased to state:

(a) whether Government are considering to take any steps to connect all the capitals of North-Eastern States with other parts of the country by air; and

(b) if so, the details thereof?

THE MINISTER OF CIVIL AVIATION (SHRI ANANTH KUMAR): (a) and (b) The following capitals of the North-Eastern States are linked:—

State	Capital
Assam—	Guwahati
Manipur—	Imphal
Tripura—	Agartala
Mizoram—	Aizwal

Shillong in Meghalaya, Kohima in Nagaland, Itanagar in Arunachal Pradesh and Gangtok in Sikkim are not airlinked at present. There is no airport at Kohima, Itanagar and Gangtok. They are, however, served through Guwahati, Dimapur, Lilabari and Bagdogra respectively.

With a view to achieving better regulation of air transport services and taking into consideration the need for air transport services of different regions in the country particularly the North East Region, the Government has laid down route dispersal guidelines. The airlines are free to provide air services to specific places depending upon the traffic demand and commercial viability subject to compliance with the route dispersal guidelines.

A proposal for developing air services to the North Eastern region is under formulation. This envisages provision of subsidy and other incentives to attract operators for connecting places in the North-East region.

Pending cases in Patna High Court

*96. SHRI S. S. AHLUWALIA: Will the Minister of LAW AND JUSTICE be pleased to state:

(a) the total number of cases pending in Patna High Court as on 30th September, 1997 and how many of these cases are pending for more than five years;

(b) whether backlog of cases in the High Court has shown upward trend in the recent years;

(c) if so, the reasons therefor; and

(d) the steps being taken for the prompt disposal of cases and providing instant justice at the Patna High Court?

THE MINISTER OF LAW, JUSTICE AND COMPANY AFFAIRS (SHRI M. THAMBI DURAI): (a) As on 30.9.1997, a total of 86,368 cases were pending in Patna High Court. Out of these 20,838 cases were pending for over five years.

(b) No, Sir. As on 1.1.1996 the pendency of cases was 95445 which stand decreased to 84666 as on 31.12.1997.

(c) Does not arise.

(d) The Registry of Patna High Court has informed that the Court have taken several steps for expeditious disposal of cases. Provision has been made to hear first appeal and Civil writ cases by single judge bench which were previously heard by a Division bench. Time to time several new benches are also constituted for hearing ready cases and steps have also been taken for calling for Lower Court Records in order to make cases ready for

hearing. Cases have been categorised into different subjects and are posted in the list of those judges who have been assigned those subjects.

Government has also taken a series of steps to simplify procedures and speed up disposal of cases on the basis of the advice and recommendations of expert bodies like the Law Commission, etc. Conference of Law Ministers, Chief Ministers and Chief Justice and other concerned with the administration of Justice are held periodically and the recommendations and conclusions emerging from such exchanges and consultations are implemented and their progress closely monitored.

Treating Re-Employed persons as continued employees by State Bank of Indore

*97. SHRI YERRA NARAYANASWAMY: Will the Minister of FINANCE be pleased to state:

(a) whether it is a fact that some re-employed persons were treated as continued employees by the State Bank of Indore during 1994-95 in order to fulfil Government's assurance given in the Rajya Sabha in the supplementary reply to Starred Question 102 on 17th November, 1988;

(b) if so, the details thereof;

(c) whether it is also a fact that the Bank has reverted to their previous decision of 4th October, 1994 in such cases in July, 1997; and

(d) if so, by when the recent decision is likely to be withdrawn by the bank and if not, the reasons therefor?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF FINANCE (SHRI R. JANARTHANAN): (a) and (b) State Bank of Indore has reported that one clerical employee of State Bank of Indore was treated to have abandoned the bank's service voluntarily with effect from 30.12.87 as per provisions of bipartite settlement as he had stayed away unauthorisedly from his duties for a long time. The employee did not approach the bank further till November 1989. On 19.12.89 the employee submitted an application in the form of a mercy petition pleading pardon for his acts and requested the bank for sympathetic consideration. He also requested the bank that if reinstatement is not possible, he may be re-appointed in the bank. The management, after considering his case sympathetically took a lenient view and decided to re-appoint him with certain conditions. The employee agreed to the conditions and joined the bank on 1.1.90. In the meantime, during the year 1988, certain questions were raised in the Parliament about this employee and some allegations were made. As assured by the Hon'ble Minister, these allegations were examined and were found untrue. Therefore the re-employment of the employee was not made in pursuance of any assurance in the Rajya Sabha.

(c) and (d) The information is being collected and will be laid on the Table of the House.

Review of Prasar Bharati Act

*98. SHRI SITARAM KESRI: Will the Minister of INFORMATION AND BROADCASTING be pleased to state:

(a) whether Government propose to conduct review of the Prasar Bharati Act; and

(b) if so, when do Government expect to come forward with their proposals before the Parliament?

THE MINISTER OF INFORMATION AND BROADCASTING (SMT. SUSHMA SWARAJ): (a) and (b) Government have initiated action for introducing a Bill for restoring the provisions of the original Prasar Bharati (Broadcasting Corporation of India) Act, 1990 in the current session of the Parliament.